



SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

MONTREAL 107, CANADA

STATEMENT BY THE ACTING PRINCIPAL OF SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

About two weeks ago a number of students and other individuals occupied the university's Computer Centre and for the last week have occupied the Faculty Club Lounge. The university, in order to avoid violence and in the hope that reason might prevail, had resisted all pressures to invoke the aid of the law and to call in the police. However, when violence broke out in the early hours of Tuesday, February 11th, 1969, and when the occupiers began to destroy university property, to ransack the cafeteria, and to turn on water hoses, the university decided that it would be derelict in its duty to the students, faculty and the community at large which supports it, if it took no action. Rather than tolerate any such further lawlessness, the university authorities after careful deliberation decided that they had no choice but to call for the assistance of the Montreal Police, and to retrieve possession of the Computer Centre.

The Montreal Police, with the full advice of the university to exercise due caution and to avoid any unnecessary use of force, attempted to remove the barricade which had been constructed by the occupants of the Computer Centre. At that moment, fire was set to the barricade from the inside, and had it not been for the courage of many policemen, many of the occupiers and many innocent people would have died in the resulting blaze.

About eighty individuals have been arrested and will be charged by the university before the criminal courts. Painful as this task may be for the university, the university has the duty to see to it that academic freedom is preserved and that no one is permitted to threaten or destroy its functions.

The Computer Centre has been wilfully destroyed with axes and other objects. Many precious records have been wantonly scattered to the wind and hundreds of pieces of furniture have been broken and damaged. The fire and other damage have rendered several floors of the university unusable. The university estimates that the material damage may exceed one million dollars, not to mention the invaluable faculty and student time lost. Immediate emergency steps will be announced in due course.

This is not a time for vindictiveness or revenge but for soul searching and re-examination of values. The university intends to act with firmness and responsibility.

The administration has made every effort to ensure that the rule of law is observed at Sir George Williams. This means that the law and regulations of the university must be accepted as such, and that any change in these laws and regulations must be implemented by lawful process. All members of the university community, both faculty and students, have wide opportunities for initiating and participating in such a process.

Many students have lost valuable study time as a result of the events of recent weeks. Every effort will be made to see that they do not suffer unfairly from this loss, a loss in many cases imposed on them through events outside their control.

Douglass Burns Clarke
Acting Principal

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